

News Release



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Contact: Darren Rogers
Senior Director, Communications & Media Services
Churchill Downs Racetrack
(502) 636-4461 (office)
(502) 345-1030 (mobile)
Darren.Rogers@KyDerby.com

WORLD NO. 4 GUN RUNNER HEADLINES FIELD OF EIGHT FOR SATURDAY'S GRADE I, \$500,000 STEPHEN FOSTER HANDICAP AT CHURCHILL DOWNS

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (Wednesday, June 14, 2017) – Winchell Thoroughbreds and Three Chimneys Farm's **Gun Runner**, ranked fourth on the Longines World's Best Racehorse Rankings, will return to action Saturday night at Churchill Downs as the 4-5 morning line favorite and 124-pound high weight for the 36th running of the \$500,000 Stephen Foster Handicap Presented by GE Appliances (Grade I) – the centerpiece of an action-packed, prime-time program billed as "**Downs After Dark Presented by Stella Artois and el Jimador.**"

The 1 1/8-mile Stephen Foster Handicap is the richest of five graded stakes races on Saturday's special 11-race night racing card that begins at 6 p.m. (all times Eastern). Total purses on the evening are \$1.358 million, which makes it the most lucrative racing day for horsemen at Churchill Downs outside of the Kentucky Derby and Kentucky Oaks programs.

Other stakes events scheduled on the night are the \$200,000 Fleur de Lis Handicap Presented by el Jimador (GII) for fillies and mares at 1 1/8 miles headlined by last year's Breeders' Cup Distaff (GI) third **Forever Unbridled**; the \$200,000 **Wise Dan** (GII) for 3-year-olds and up at 1 1/16 miles on turf led by defending champ **Pleuven (Fr)**; the \$100,000 Matt Winn (GIII) for 3-year-olds at 1 1/16 miles featuring three-time graded stakes winner **McCraken**, who finished eighth in the Kentucky Derby (GI) at odds of 6-1; and a well-matched cast of a dozen 3-year-old fillies in the \$100,000 Regret Presented by Cox's Smokers Outlet (GIII) at 1 1/8 miles on grass.

The Stephen Foster Handicap has been carded as Race 8 at 9:39 p.m. **NBCSN** will televise the race from 8:30-10 p.m. to launch its 2017 "Breeders' Cup Challenge Series: Win and You're In," presented by Lane's End Farm and America's Best Racing" television schedule. Also, **Horse Racing Radio Network** (HRRN) will air live coverage from 8-10 p.m. ET online at www.horseracingradio.net.

A field of eight older horses was entered Wednesday for Saturday's Foster, which is an appealing **Breeders' Cup "Win and You're In" Challenge Series** stakes event that will guarantee the winner a berth in the \$6 million Breeders' Cup Classic on Nov. 4 at Del Mar.

Gun Runner enters the Foster strictly as the horse to beat. The 4-year-old colt impressively beat a powerful group of accomplished older rivals in last fall's \$500,000 Clark Handicap Presented by Norton Healthcare (GI) at Churchill Downs and was runner-up to world No. 1 **Arrogate** in March's \$10 million Dubai World Cup (GI) 12 weeks ago.

Gun Runner looked like a World Cup winner at the top of the stretch, but **Arrogate**, who overcame a dreadful start, swooped past him inside the final furlong with a powerful rally to win by 2 1/4 lengths. **Gun Runner** was five lengths clear of third-place finisher **Neolithic** in the full field of 14.

In addition to the Clark, **Gun Runner**'s 3-year-old campaign included wins in the Risen Star (GII), Louisiana Derby (GII) and Matt Winn (GIII), runner-up efforts in the Pennsylvania Derby (GII) and Breeders' Cup Dirt Mile (GI) and third-place finishes in the Kentucky Derby Presented by Yum! Brands (GI) and Travers Stakes (GI).

Prior to the Dubai World Cup, **Gun Runner** was a 5 3/4-length winner of the \$500,000 Razorback (GIII) at Oaklawn Park. Overall, the Kentucky-bred son of Candy Ride (ARG) has an impressive 14-7-3-2 record with \$4,337,800 in earnings.

"**Gun Runner** was a completely different horse last year during his 3-year-old campaign," said his Hall of Fame trainer **Steve Asmussen**, who won the 2008 Stephen Foster with two-time Horse of the Year **Curlin**. "He has physically developed into a different animal. We knew with his type of running style and pedigree that he would keep getting better over time. We're very excited to run him Saturday night. We gave him a break after he ran in Dubai and he's been training smoothly ever since."

The Foster will be **Gun Runner**'s first start since the Dubai World Cup 12 weeks ago and formally launches a second-half-of-the-season campaign that his connections hope will culminate with a start in the 1 1/4-mile Breeders' Cup Classic. He landed post 3 for the Foster and will be ridden by his regular pilot **Florent Geroux**.

"It's been such an honor to ride him," Geroux said. "He's such a classy horse. No matter how the race develops he tries his heart out. He was beaten in his last start by one of the best horses in the world, so we really can't hold that against him. Hopefully we get a rematch with **Arrogate** later on this year."

Gun Runner will attempt to join **No Marker** (1989-90), **Saint Liam** (2004-05) and **Blame** (2009-10) as horses who won the Clark in the fall and returned to Churchill Downs to win next spring's Stephen Foster.

-more-

Favorites have a record of 35-7-10-4 (20%) in the Stephen Foster.

The Stephen Foster Handicap field from the rail out (with jockeys, assigned weights and morning line odds): **Bird Song** (Julien Leparoux, 119 pounds, 6-1); **Breaking Lucky** (Luis Contreras, 117, 8-1); **Gun Runner** (Geroux, 124, 4-5); **Honorable Duty** (Javier Castellano, 119, 6-1); **Mo Tom** (Corey Lanerie, 115, 20-1); **Hawaakom** (Miguel Mena, 115, 12-1); **Texas Chrome** (C.J. McMahon, 117, 12-1); and **Stanford** (John Velazquez, 117, 5-1).

Chief among Gun Runner's rivals are include **Bird Song** and **Honorable Duty**, who ran 1-2 in the \$400,000 Alysheba Presented by Big Fish Casino (GII) on the Kentucky Oaks undercard. **Marylou Whitney Stables LLC**'s 4-year-old homebred Bird Song (11-5-2-1—\$484,207), trained by **Ian Wilkes** who won the 2013 Foster with **Fort Larned**, figures to help set the Foster pace along with favored Gun Runner.

"He's a speedy horse," Wilkes said. "We can't really worry about anyone else in the race, just run to what we're good at doing. We know the talent level of some of the other competitors but at the end of the day we just need to do our thing and hope it works."

David A. Ross' Honorable Duty (13-6-3-1—\$577,276) won three stakes in a row this winter at Fair Grounds for trainer **Brendan Walsh** before falling 1 ½ lengths short of Bird Song in the Alysheba: the \$75,000 Tenacious, \$122,500 Mineshaft Handicap (GIII) and \$400,000 New Orleans Handicap (GII).

Both Bird Song and Honorable Duty will carry five pounds less than top-weighted Gun Runner.

Stanford (16-6-5-0—\$1,370,960), the 5-year-old who races for the **Stonestreet Stables LLC, Michael Tabor, Mrs. John Magnier** and **Derrick Smith** partnership, won last year's \$1.25 million Charles Town Classic (GII) and \$100,000 Harlan's Holiday (GIII) for powerful big-race trainer **Todd Pletcher**, who seeks his first Foster win.

Trainer **Reade Baker** has brought Canadian invader **Breaking Lucky** (19-3-5-3—\$953,776) back to Churchill Downs for another try against Gun Runner. The 5-year-old horse, owned by **Gunpowder Farms LLC, West Point Thoroughbreds LLC, Reeves Thoroughbred Racing, Eric Young and R.A. Hill Stable**, made a bold move in the stretch at odds of 46-1 to finish second to Gun Runner in the Nov. 25 Clark.

A quick pace could benefit **G M B Racing**'s **Mo Tom** (13-4-1-3—\$625,176), who does his best running late for trainer **Tom Amoss**. The 4-year-old colt won last year's Lecomte (GIII) and Ohio Derby, and was eighth in the Kentucky Derby.

Hawaakom and **Texas Chrome** have run second in Grade III events this year. **Stephan H. Smoot** and **Wes Hawley**'s Hawaakom (34-8-7-7—\$581,175) – the only non-graded stakes winner in the field – was second to Gun Runner two starts ago in the Razorback. **Keene Thoroughbreds LLC**'s Texas Chrome (17-8-3-3—\$925,962), trained by **J.R. Caldwell**, finished second to a pair of **Bob Baffert**-trained horses – recent Met Mile winner **Mor Spirit** and **Danzing Candy** – in the Steve Sexton Mile (GIII) and Lone Star Park Handicap (GIII), respectively.

The Stephen Foster Handicap, which was elevated to Grade I status in 2002, has had a strong influence on the Breeders' Cup Classic and Horse of the Year honors. Three horses used victories in the Stephen Foster as part of their résumés in Horse of the Year campaigns: **Black Tie Affair** (1991), **Saint Liam** (2005) and **Curlin** (2008). In addition, two runner-ups were crowned Horse of the Year: **Mineshaft** (2003) and **Wise Dan** (2012). Also, **Awesome Again** (1998) and **Blame** (2010) completed same-year Foster-Classic doubles. Fort Larned won the Classic in 2012, and won the Foster the following year prior to a fourth-place run in his bid for a second Classic win.

Champion **Victory Gallop** owns the stakes and track record for 1 1/8 miles of 1:47.28, which was established in 1999.

The theme for Saturday night's "Downs After Dark" is "South Beach" and guests are encouraged to dress in Miami-inspired bright colors.

Select connections from Team **Always Dreaming** – owners **MeB Racing Stables** (Mary Ellen Bonomo), **Brooklyn Boyz Stables** (Anthony Bonomo), **Teresa Viola Racing Stables**, **St. Elias Stable** (Vincent Viola), **Siena Farm LLC** (Anthony Manganaro) and **West Point Thoroughbreds** (Terry Finley), breeders **Santa Rosa Partners**, trainer **Todd Pletcher** and jockey **John Velazquez** – will be on hand to accept their newly-engraved Kentucky Derby 143 trophies for the Bodemeister colt's triumph in America's greatest race on May 6. The ceremony in the G.H. MUMM Winner's Circle, which includes an unveiling of the official event logo for the 2018 Kentucky Derby, is scheduled for 8:40 p.m. after the running of Race 6.

Fans in attendance will be able to take pictures with Always Dreaming's engraved Kentucky Derby 143 trophies as they'll be on display inside the Gate 17 lobby from 5-7 p.m.

General admission to Churchill Downs is \$10 on Saturday night. Box seats are \$25 and reserved dining packages are \$70. New this year is the **Guest Chef Series @ Millionaire's Row**, which will showcase Chef **Anthony Lamas** of Louisville's popular Latin restaurant **Seviche**. The \$149 tickets include a specially-designed menu by Lamas and a full-bar package featuring specialty cocktails by el Jimador Tequila. All ticket options can be purchased online at www.ChurchillDowns.com/Tickets.

The evening's entertainment includes music on the Plaza Stage courtesy of **Milenio Salsa Band** from 7:30-11 p.m., Salsa dance demonstrations, cocktail demonstrations by el Jimador, a "**James Beard Culinary Challenge**" and "**Bet or No Bet**" where four lucky fans can take \$100 in cash or place a free \$1,000 win bet on a horse in Races 6-9. The party will be elevated to new levels at 11 p.m. when popular **DJ A-trak** mixes sounds on the turntable until midnight on the Plaza Stage.

Admission gates will open Saturday at 5 p.m. and the first of 11 races will begin at 6 p.m. (all times Eastern). The final live race will be 11:10 p.m. but the on-track party will continue in the spacious Plaza area until midnight.

FOREVER UNBRIDLED TO MAKE FIRST START OF YEAR IN GRADE II, \$200,000 FLEUR DE LIS 'CAP

Charles E. Fipke's 5-year-old homebred mare **Forever Unbridled**, who finished third behind champions **Beholder** and **Songbird** in last November's Breeders' Cup Distaff (Grade I) at Santa Anita, will make her first start of the year as the 4-5 morning line favorite and 123-pound high weight for Saturday's 42nd running of the \$200,000 Fleur de Lis Handicap Presented by el Jimador (GII) at Churchill Downs.

For the third year in a row, the 1 1/8-mile Fleur De Lis is a **Breeders' Cup Challenge Series "Win and You're In"** stakes event, which means the winner will be guaranteed a berth in the \$2 million Breeders' Cup Distaff (GI) at Del Mar on Nov. 3.

The Fleur de Lis – which means “Flower of the Lily” and honors the French symbol that is incorporated into the city of Louisville’s flag – will be run as Race 7 at 9:09 p.m. (all times Eastern). It will be televised live by **NBCSN** as part of the “Breeders’ Cup Challenge Series: Win and You’re In, presented by Lane’s End Farm and America’s Best Racing” broadcast that airs from 8:30-10 p.m.

Forever Unbridled, trained by **Dallas Stewart**, will face a eight other fillies and mares in the 1 1/8-mile race that will mark her first start since undergoing surgery to remove a bone chip from her left front ankle after the Breeders' Cup Distaff. She had been under consideration for start in the \$100,000 Chicago Handicap (GIII), a seven-furlong sprint for females at Churchill Downs on June 24, but Stewart opted to make her comeback here.

“Obviously getting her back in top shape for the Breeders’ Cup is the main goal so we'll keep our options open and hope for the best,” Stewart said.

The Kentucky-bred daughter of Unbridled Song and 2006 Kentucky Oaks winner **Lemons Forever** had an outstanding 4-year-old campaign with Grade I wins in the \$600,000 Apple Blossom Handicap at Oaklawn Park and \$400,000 Beldame at Belmont Park.

Overall, Forever Unbridled, who'll break from the rail under **Joel Rosario**, boasts a 14-5-3-4—\$1,591,600 career record.

Also expected to draw support are **Big World** and **Romantic Vision**, who finished 1-2 in the \$300,000 La Troienne Presented by Spirited Funds (GI) on Kentucky Oaks Day; Allaire DuPont Distaff (GIII) runner-up **Carrumba**; and Matron (GIII) winner **Walkabout**.

The Fleur de Lis Handicap field from the rail out (with jockeys, assigned weights and morning line odds): Forever Unbridled (Rosario, 123 pounds, 4-5); Walkabout (Brian Hernandez Jr., 120, 10-1); Carrumba (John Velazquez, 117, 6-1); **Crooked Stick** (Sophie Doyle, 115, 30-1); Big World (Florent Geroux, 121, 6-1); Romantic Vision (Julien Leparoux, 118, 8-1); **Apologynotaccepted** (Luis Saez, 117, 15-1); **Tiger Moth** (Javier Castellano, 114, 12-1); and **Weep No More** (Corey Lanerie, 116, 10-1).

PLEUVEN FAVORED TO DEFEND TITLE SATURDAY'S GRADE II, \$200,000 WISE DAN

Defending Wise Dan (Grade II) champ **Pleuven (FR)** is the 3-1 morning line favorite to defend his title in Saturday's 28th running of the \$200,000 race for 3-year-olds up over the Matt Winn Turf Course at Churchill Downs.

Owned by **Nelson McMakin** and trained by **Phil Sims**, Pleuven (FR), now age 6 with a record of 18-7-3-4—\$365,672, won last year's Wise Dan by tracking pacesetter **Kasaqui (ARG)** before drawing even with that rival with an eighth of mile to run and inching clear late to post a three-quarter length victory. Those two, along with third-place finisher **Thatcher Street**, will meet again Saturday night.

Pleuven (FR) prepped for the 1 1/16-mile Wise Dan with a comfortable 2 ½-length score in the \$56,340 Opening Verse at Churchill Downs on Thurby – Thursday of Kentucky Derby Week on May 4. It was his third U.S. stakes win since coming stateside from his native France in 2013.

The competitive Wise Dan, which lured a field of eight, also attracted multiple graded stakes winner **Chocolate Ride** and **Bondurant**, who finished 1-2 in an allowance/optional claiming race over 1 1/16 miles on turf at Churchill Downs on May 18.

The Wise Dan field from the rail out (with jockeys and morning line odds): **Security Risk** (John Velazquez, 5-1); Bondurant (Brian Hernandez Jr., 8-1); Thatcher Street (Julien Leparoux, 4-1); Chocolate Ride (Shaun Bridgmohan, 5-1); Kasaqui (ARG) (James Graham, 6-1); **Conquest Panthera** (Robby Albarado, 6-1); Pleuven (FR) (Corey Lanerie, 3-1); and **Blofeld** (Joel Rosario, 10-1).

All horses will carry 121 pounds.

The Wise Dan will go as Race 6 at 8:35 p.m.

McCRAKEN RETURNS IN SATURDAY'S GRADE III MATT WINN AFTER EIGHTH-PLACE FINISH IN DERBY

Whitham Thoroughbreds LLC's multiple stakes-winning homebred colt **McCraken** is the odds-on 4-5 favorite against five other 3-year-olds in Saturday's 20th running of the \$100,000 Matt Winn (Grade III) at Churchill Downs as the son of Ghostzapper attempts to rebound from a disappointing eighth-place finish in the \$2 million Kentucky Derby Presented by Yum! Brands (GI).

McCraeken was the Derby's 6-1 third betting choice following a pair of graded stakes wins on the Road to the Kentucky Derby. He followed a Street Sense Overnight Stakes win at Churchill Downs last fall with victories in the Kentucky Jockey Club (GII), also at Churchill Downs, and Sam F. Davis (GIII) at Tampa Bay before finishing third in Keeneland's Blue Grass (GII) prior to the Derby.

McCraeken (6-4-0-1—\$410,848), trained **Ian Wilkes** and regularly ridden by **Brian Hernandez Jr.**, emerged from the May 6 Derby with cut on his left hind leg that likely occurred during a bumping incident shortly after the start of the 1 ¼-mile Classic, won by **Always Dreaming**.

"He's been doing great," Wilkes said. "It was very frustrating with the cut he suffered in the Derby. It took a long time to heal and get him back to where he's comfortable. It's still not completely healed but it doesn't bother him at all to run. We were once at the top of the 3-year-old list but now we need to prove ourselves again."

The Matt Winn field from rail out (with jockeys and morning line odds): **Excitations** (Miguel Mena, 9-2); McCraeken (Brian Hernandez Jr., 4-5); **Colonelsdarktemper** (Jon Court, 4-1); **Mo's Mojo** (Julien Leparoux, 10-1); **Aquamarine** (Florent Geroux, 5-1); and **Society Beau** (Robby Albarado, 12-1).

McCraeken will carry 123 pounds, while all others tote 118.

The Matt Winn, which honors the famed Churchill Downs president and general manager that served as the driving force in the development of Churchill Downs and Kentucky Derby, will go as Race 5 on Saturday at approximately 8:03 p.m. (all times Eastern). Winn will be elected into the National Museum of Racing's Hall of Fame as a "Pillar of the Turf" on Aug. 4.

A DOZEN WELL-MATCHED 3-YEAR-OLD FILLIES MEET IN SATURDAY'S GRADE III, \$100,000 REGRET

William Pacella, Frank Jones and Frank Shoop's Sweeping Paddy and **Patricia Moseley's Proctor's Ledge**, the third and fourth-place finishers, respectively, in the \$150,000 Edgewood Presented by Forcht Bank (Grade III) on Kentucky Oaks Day, are set to rematch Saturday at Churchill Downs in the 48th running of the \$100,000 Regret Stakes (GIII) Presented by Cox's Smokers Outlets against a well-matched field of 12 3-year-old fillies.

The Regret, run at 1 1/8 miles on the Matt Winn Turf Course, is carded as Race 9 with a post time of approximately 10:15 p.m.

Sweeping Paddy, a daughter of Paddy O'Prado trained by **Dale Romans**, has one career victory as a 2-year-old but has finished in the top three four times in her eight race career. Jockey **Luis Saez** has the return call on Sweeping Paddy, who was defeated 3 ¼ lengths in the Edgewood at odds of 22-1.

Proctor's Ledge will attempt to give trainer **Brendan Walsh** his second consecutive win in the Regret. Walsh won the 2016 edition with **Auntie Joy**. Proctor's Ledge, a two-time winner, is scheduled to be piloted by Churchill Downs' leading rider **Corey Lanerie**.

Sweeping Paddy and Proctor's Ledge will have to contend with five rivals that won their previous start, including back-to-back winner **Sameeha**. The daughter of Street Cry (Ire) most recently was a Keeneland allowance victor on April 23 for trainer **Dan Peitz**.

The Regret field from the rail out (with jockeys and morning line odds): **Blame the Law** (Joel Rosario, 15-1); Sweeping Paddy (Luis Saez, 4-1); **La Manta Gris** (Julien Leparoux, 15-1); Proctor's Ledge (Corey Lanerie, 7-2); **Like a Hurricane** (Brian Hernandez Jr., 12-1); **Anothertequilashot** (Gabriel Saez, 30-1); **Summer Luck** (Florent Geroux, 10-1); **Savannah Belle** (Declan Cannon, 12-1); Sameeha (Joe Rocco Jr., 8-1); **Fizzy Friday (GB)** (John Velazquez, 10-1); **Starr Bear** (Javier Castellano, 8-1); and **Chubby Star** (Ricardo Santana Jr., 5-1).

The Regret – the last of five stakes on the Stephen Foster Handicap program – annually pays homage to the first filly to win the Kentucky Derby in 1915. Undefeated in three starts as a 2-year-old, Regret made her 3-year-old debut in the Derby and won in wire-to-wire fashion by three lengths.

BREEDERS' CUP BETTING CHALLENGE QUALIFIER ON STEPHEN FOSTER HANDICAP NIGHT – Some of the nation's elite horseplayers will descend upon Churchill Downs on Saturday night and attempt to secure seats at the 2017 Breeders' Cup Betting Challenge as they pit their handicapping skills against the best Louisville has to offer.

Churchill Downs' Breeders' Cup Betting Challenge Live Bankroll Qualifier is a "real money" handicapping tournament with a \$2,000 buy-in, of which \$1,500 will be used by participants to wager on Saturday night's 11-race Stephen Foster Handicap card with the other \$500 going toward the entry fee and prize pool. Wager types permitted are Win, Place, Show, Exacta, Trifecta and Daily Double only.

The top two finishers in the satellite tournament will receive \$10,000 Breeders' Cup Betting Challenge seats for the Nov. 3-4 event at Del Mar plus a \$1,000 travel voucher. The third-place finisher will receive a \$2,500 partial BCBC entry and \$500 travel voucher.

Saturday's prize pool is based on 50 entries. All entry fees will be paid back to prize pool should more than 50 entries participate. Horseplayers can register by emailing **Gary Palmisano** at Gary.Palmisano@KyDerby.com.

Same as the qualifier, the BCBC is a "real money" handicapping challenge. Players will required to deposit \$10,000, of which \$7,500 will be the players' bankroll for wagering during the tournament. Of the \$10,000 buy-in, \$2,500 will be placed in the prize pool. If 400 players enter the tournament, the cash prize pool paid will be \$1 million.

ALL-STAKES PICK 5 TO BE OFFERED SATURDAY NIGHT – Churchill Downs will make it a special night for bettors at Saturday's "Downs After Dark" as the track offers an all-stakes Pick 5 as part of its special wagering menu.

The all-stakes Pick 5 will cover Races 5-9 starting at 8:03 p.m., which will encompass the Matt Winn (Race 5), Wise Dan (Race 6), Fleur de Lis Handicap (Race 7), Stephen Foster Handicap (Race 8) and Regret (Race 9). There also will be an all-stakes Pick 4 on Races 6-9.

All told, there will be three Pick 5s (Races 2-6, Races 5-9 and Races 7-11) and three Pick 4s (Races 1-4, Races 6-9 and Races 8-11) on the night.

Both the Pick 4 and Pick 5 are 50-cent minimum bets.

The 20-cent minimum Single-6 Jackpot will cover Races 4-9. The jackpot carryover for a lone winning ticket was \$96,299 entering Thursday's eight-race program, which is scheduled to begin at 5 p.m.

WEATHER: MOSTLY SUNNY SKIES, 93 – According to the **National Weather Service**, Saturday's forecast calls for Louisville calls for mostly sunny skies with a high near 93 and a slight 20-percent chance of showers and thunderstorms before 9 a.m. and after 3 p.m. The low will be around 74.

-END-